

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 VIENTI 05162 021209Z

50

ACTION EA-14

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INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

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SSO-00 /154 W

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R 021123Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9738

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 5162

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA, VN

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD PRG RECOGNITION ISSUE

1. DURING CALL ON KITHONG VONGSAY, LEGAL ADVISER TO PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA, FOR DISCUSSION OF FACTS RELATED TO DETENTION OF US CITIZEN ROBERT GIBSON (REPORTED SEPTTEL), EMBOFF WAS ASKED BY KITHONG FOR RUNDOWN OF REASONS WHY USG OPPOSED RECOGNITION OF PRG BY LAOS. KITHONG SAID THIS ISSUE WAS FIRST ON AGENDA FOR CABINET DISCUSSION WEDNESDAY JULY 3, AND HE EXPECTED LENGTHY AND BITTER ARGUMENTS TO BE PRESENTED BY BOTH PATHET LAO AND VIENTIANE SIDES. KITHONG IMPLIED THAT PRIME MINISTER WAS ACTIVELY REVIEWING PRG RECOGNITION ISSUE TODAY.

2. EMBOFF CAREFULLY PRESENTED CASE AGAINST LAO RECOGNITION OF PRG. KITHONG ACKNOWLEDGED THAT RECOGNITION WOULD BE SENSELESS MOVE WHICH CONTRAVENED PRIME MINISTER'S TRADITIONAL POSITION AS WELL AS TENETS OF 1962 GENEVA AGREEMENTS ON LAOS WHICH WERE BASIS OF LAO FOREIGN POLICY. HOWEVER, HE SAID, PRIME MINISTER WAS
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 VIENTI 05162 021209Z

UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE TO MAKE CONCESSION ON THIS ISSUE.

3. KITHONG SAID THAT FOREIGN MINISTER PHOUMI VONGVICHIT HAD THREATENED THAT PATHET LAO WOULD "WALK OUT OF PGNU AND RETURN TO SAM NEUA IF PRG WAS NOT RECOGNIZED." IN ADDITION, DURING SOUVANNA'S LAST VISIT TO LUANG PRABANG, JNPC CHAIRMAN SOUPHANOUVONG HAD ASKED SOUVANNA "AS PERSONAL FAVOR" TO HAVE PRG RECOGNIZED. KITHONG MUSED THAT: "PRIME MINISTER IS AN OLD MAN AND VERY TIRED---HE DOES NOT WANT TO SEE HIS GOVERNMENT FALL APART AND HE ESPECIALLY WANTS TO BE NICE TO HIS BROTHER." MOREOVER, ACCORDING TO KITHONG, VIENTIANE SIDE CABINET MEMBERS ARE NOT FIGHTING AS STRONGLY AS THEY SHOULD. FINALLY, KITHONG BELIEVES, THE PATHET LAO ARE USING THE CASE OF DETAINED U.S. PRIVATE CITIZEN ROBERT GIBSON TO EXERT PRESSURE ON PRG ISSUE. IF THE PRG IS RECOGNIZED BY PGNU, THE PATHET LAO MIGHT PERMIT GIBSON TO BE RELEASED AS A TACIT QUID PRO QUO.

4. KITHONG WOULD NOT VENTURE A GUESS AS TO THE OUTCOME OF TOMORROW'S CABINET MEETING, BUT EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE PRG RECOGNITION ISSUE WOULD AGAIN BE DEFERRED FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION THE FOLLOWING WEEK.

5. COMMENT: WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT THE PATHET LAO ARE MAKING A LINKAGE BETWEEN THE GIBSON CASE AND THE PRG RECOGNITION ISSUE. IN ADDITION, ALL OUR OTHER INFORMATION INDICATES THAT THE VIENTIANE SIDE MEMBERS OF THE CABINET ARE WELL-MOBILIZED AND DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THIS ISSUE, AND ARE PREPARED TO PUT UP STIFF RESISTANCE IN TOMORROW'S CABINET MEETING.

CHAPMAN

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